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FINAL REPORT

EL SALVADOR

HEALTH AND JOBS FOR DISPLACED FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

The civil conflict since 1979 had seriously disrupted the level of socio-economic welfare and development and inflicted extensive suffering on much of the population, especially in rural areas. The number of people who fled their homelands grew tenfold from an estimated 25,000 in 1979 to 250,000 in 1982. Official estimates in 1985 indicated that the displaced population may have reached 500,000. Emergency relief needs far exceeded the resources available, with government agencies providing some level of assistance to approximately 400,000 people, and the remaining 100,000 being attended to through non-governmental organizations.

In 1980 the Government of El Salvador established the National Commission for Assistance to the Displaced of El Salvador (CONADES) to coordinate all local and foreign assistance being provided for this target population. The present AID Project "Emergency Program: Health and Jobs for Displaced Families" was started in 1982 and was designed as an emergency response to meet the basic needs of the displaced for:

- (1) occasional employment to generate cash income
- (2) preventative and curative health services, and
- (3) shelter and food assistance.

CONADES was assigned the responsibility for the health and food aid components under this Project. AID created an internal office to handle the other components and to provide technical assistance to CONADES with food distribution and controls.

CONADES personnel were invested with a broad range of duties and responsibilities, including food aid distribution, community needs assessment, and implementing, monitoring, and evaluating field activities and programs. However, general problem areas became evident, and the present as well as previous technical assistance contracts were established to better ensure the overall success of Project activities. The present contract has focused on these problems and in the five Task Areas identified to correct implementation difficulties:

- I. Maintain a dynamic register of qualified displaced families and provide continual monitoring of activities
- II. Participate in the design and implementation of economic reintegration programs
- III. Propose sound food aid logistics management practices
- IV. Assist in closing down camps for displaced families or making permanent improvements in the living conditions
- V. Provide assistance to improve institutional program efficiency.

This final report addresses these Task Areas and broadly examines the activities undertaken to facilitate Project implementation.

TASK AREA 1

A primary area of concern under the technical assistance contract was to focus on identifying the target population as families that had been displaced from their place of origin because of the armed conflict and could be attended to by CONADES. This clarification is important, since there are other institutions both public sector and non-governmental which carry out assistance activities with displaced families.

Much emphasis had been placed on establishing a "dynamic register" of beneficiaries to maintain accountability between the three perspectives of the program: the families registered as displaced, the basic food rations distributed, and the related projects undertaken. The register would be adjusted as new families qualified for assistance and for those deleted who no longer met the criteria.

A necessary complementary element to a register was to maintain an independent monitoring mechanism to evaluate the degree of compliance with the policies and regulations at both the individual and community levels. The monitoring function had to be at both the field and central office levels and also served to carry out periodic evaluations of the assistance program activities and the participant families.

Specific Accomplishments and Conclusions

- 1) Beneficiary Registry CONADES' register of beneficiaries always had suffered from a lack of effective coordination between the local level social promotor (who had the responsibility to add or subtract people from the lists of participants) and the central office expeditor of foodstuffs, with the central computer center supposedly as an intermediary. RONCO efforts were aimed at strengthening the promoters' understanding and utilization of eligibility criteria for participants and the computer center's throughput of information to continually update the register.

A solid information bank was formed by the results of the December 1990 census of 365 displaced population communities, which was organized, supervised, and financed by RONCO through a local consulting firm with full participation by CONADES promotion staff. Basic information on 27,685 families (over 150,000 persons) was gathered and used to establish a new register which more closely followed eligibility criteria.

This data bank was thereafter maintained current by developing training programs for the promoters that handled the lists of project participants and the resulting food distribution. Field visits were made to check on the use of these lists and their problems, to verify the validity of the information, and to offer recommendations. Similar training was carried out with the office staff that used the data in the areas of social promotion, project implementation, and storage and transport logistics.

- 2) **Monitoring: CONADES** This function consisted in an independent check on the chain of activities in food distribution, at times starting with the receipt of food stocks in the port of entry, shipment to the warehouses, local transportation to the distribution site, and final delivery to the beneficiaries. Checks were made on inventory volumes, product dating and quality controls, compliance with regulations concerning food distribution, and verification of information on participants.

Another type of monitoring dealt with the activities through which people qualified to receive foodstuffs. Such activities included the following types of projects: agricultural, construction and improvement of infrastructure, vocational training, relocation and return to place of origin, line of credit, and productive activities. Since the implementation materials generally were purchased and immediately transported to the project site, the monitoring involved field level verification of the participants and if the project actually was being or had been implemented.

During RONCO's contract period the level of effort was equivalent to three full-time persons, focused mainly on compliance with food distribution norms and use of registry and covering nearly if not all communities under CONADES' program. After the census information was compiled, a shift was made within RONCO to emphasize more the projects' outputs and impact, combined with on-site technical assistance in the different areas of expertise to improve implementation efficiency while still maintaining a monitoring presence.

- 3) **Monitoring: CONARA** RONCO has provided a monitoring presence similar to that explained above, but under the Combined Civic Actions Program of CONARA (the civilian-military National Commission for the Restoration of Areas) until the end of 1990, when the program was discontinued. The monitoring function covered the distribution of foodstuffs, medicines, and clothing in areas which were still considered as dangerous and of critical importance. On a weekly basis visits were made to 3 to 4 civic action sites (30 to 40 percent of the weekly total), overseeing the distribution to an average of 150 to 200 people per action. Other activities were the continual verification of inventories, quality controls of food stocks, destruction of severely damaged stocks, and retail market checks to determine if donated stocks were being diverted from their intended use by beneficiaries or other persons. Until the program was finally phased out in early 1991, RONCO maintained a level of effort of one full-time person.

- 4) **Monitoring: Catholic Relief Services -- Cáritas** RONCO also carried out a monitoring function in AID's Maternal-Infant Health Program. Since the same technician served both this activity as well as CONARA, attention to CRS-Cáritas program was partial until the CONARA program ended, and then it became nearly full-time. Each of the eight Catholic Dioceses were visited to review inventory records and administrative procedures. Spot checks were made in approximately four different nutrition centers weekly to observe the distribution of food stocks, the

nutrition and weight records kept for each participating child, and if any agricultural projects were being implemented. RONCO's advisor also provided technical assistance and training to Cáritas staff concerning food stock storage, handling, and conservation practices.

- 5) **Evaluation** During the last two and one-half years RONCO organized, participated in, and completed the analysis of four diagnostic studies of communities of displaced populations. The first in early 1990 covered 374 communities presently being attended to (active) or no longer being attended to (inactive) by CONADES. The second in mid-1991 included only those considered active at that time (totaling 162). As a result of this second analysis, CONADES' focus concentrated more on completing projects that would bring the communities up to a relative welfare level similar to others nearby, and in this form finish the assistance to the "graduated" community.

The third diagnostic reached 32 inactive communities as a sample of a total of 111 in early 1992, basically to judge if there had been any change in their condition after CONADES ended its assistance. The answer was that those communities that had improved in basic infrastructure since 1990, had achieved this on their own, rather than because of outside assistance from other institutions. Another observation was that most communities of displaced population did not show major differences in basic services and infrastructure characteristics from neighboring communities. In part this was because the displaced have become more dispersed (less concentrated), indicating an integration into the surrounding communities. This is an important point, since the overall AID Project objective is to "assist CONADES reintegrate displaced families into the economy of the country and become independent of welfare assistance." this observation does not mean the inactive displaced population now enjoys an adequate standard of living, but rather that these groups no longer are as marginalized from their surrounding society as they had been.

The fourth diagnostic study was completed in June 1992, reaching 268 active and inactive communities, plus 1,577 family-level interviews. Several of the most striking conclusions reached through the analysis were that:

- a) 77 percent of these communities receive no direct assistance from either public or private entities; 20 percent receive attention from private institutions and/or NGOs; and, only 3 percent are assisted as displaced persons by government agencies.
- b) In general terms, the living conditions in these communities have not improved substantially, but rather many of their residents remain in poverty and overcrowding; many of the activities directed at these groups have been as temporary or emergency relief, instead of attempting more permanent solutions for their poverty, such as

creating employment opportunities.

- c) It is obvious that food aid programs have not focused on promoting development as a primary objective, but rather food distribution was seen as the major rationale by the respective institution for undertaking projects, often without respecting the guidelines and regulations established through bilateral agreements.

A general conclusion was that monitoring was a function seen as related to audits or detective work: often necessary but unpleasant. This program element should include the active participation of the implementing agency to facilitate the acceptance of its findings and operation. RONCO did modify this function to include technical assistance as well, with generally favorable responses by all the affected institutions (CONADES, Cáritas, and Catholic Relief Services).

TASK AREA 2

CONADES has existed since 1980 with a mandate to meet the emergency needs of large concentrations of displaced people through the direct distribution of basic foodstuffs. However once the initial emergency stage passed, the task became that of reintegrating the family into the society and the economy.

This task is much more complicated and had to be tailored to fit different situations. One case was the return of the family to its place of origin whenever that became feasible for security reasons. For many families, this option was the preferred one even after years of living usually in more urban surroundings (and receiving some assistance). Data from the 1990 census by CONADES show that 43 percent of families wished to return to their homelands, even though less than one-half (45 percent) owned farm land there (most displaced are from rural areas). The second was the permanent resettlement of families on rural lands that were available and unused. This option is complex, and the beneficiaries need to be carefully selected to minimize the abandonment rate. The third case was to develop productive activities among the beneficiaries which they would be able to use whether they return home, are resettled, or elect to remain in their present location or move on their own. Different modalities were used, such as food for work and food for development, but the emphasis was on discrete projects for which the beneficiaries received basic materials and foodstuffs and which were referred to as productive projects.

The role of RONCO was to assist CONADES in determining what activities could be feasible to accomplish, with whom, and for how long, all within the guidelines for food aid established by the donor agencies (AID and the UN's World Food Program). By the end of the technical assistance contract period, RONCO advisors had participated in a variety of areas aimed at economic rehabilitation and relocation of displaced people. Despite these efforts, the overall results were modest for a variety of organizational factors which limited the effectiveness of CONADES' resources. These factors are dealt with in Task Area No.

5, but the effect of this weakness was most clearly seen in relation to productive projects, given the inherent complexity and difficulty. The crux of the problem lay with the Projects Office's responsibility for all project procurement and implementation decisions, whereas the actual planning, procurement, and implementation actions were carried out by other offices: the Social Promotion Department organized community groups; Storage and Distribution organized the distribution of foodstuffs; Computer Center maintained the registry of participating families; Projects authorized the acquisition of goods and services and the list of food aid recipients; General Services actually ordered the goods and services; and the Planning Office was isolated from the entire process except at the beginning, when it prepared the institutional action plan (after little consultation with the other parties). By the end of this period a far-reaching reorganization and decentralization of CONADES had taken place, but it was too little and too late to be able to demonstrate an impact anywhere near that expected for the volume of resources involved. Another factor of reintegration of people concerns the physical aspects or environment, such as housing and other infrastructure and basic services. Project activities related to these elements are discussed later under Task Area No. 4.

Specific Accomplishments and Conclusions

- 1) Relocation This activity relates to assisting families return to their place of origin (especially if they have access to housing or farmland) and to resettling landless families on available government-held rural lands. Actions by RONCO staff focused on the legal aspects and on field-level implementation carried out by government employees in CONADES and ISTA (the land reform institute).

In the legal area RONCO assisted in preparing an updated agreement between ISTA and Ministry of Interior/CONADES, in designing the program and procedures for a computerized land titling system, which ISTA has used to issue more than 10,000 titles (including under this project), and finally in drafting the law to facilitate registering these titles, all of which are now in effect.

In actual implementation RONCO carried out numerous actions, starting with the formulation of the methodology and an implementation manual for both returning population and resettlements. Other activities include training of field personnel in the promotion and assistance to beneficiaries, making visual inspections of possible properties, assisting in procedures for the topographical measurement and parceling of lands, training and providing support to regional field staff in the promotion and selection of participant families, and lastly, helping to carry out a socio-economic evaluation of participant families in early 1992.

The end results of this program during 1991-92 was the return of 104 families by CONADES (many more had been helped by other Project entities and NGOs) and the resettlement of 218 families. During the AID Project a total of 19 resettlements had been accomplished with 897 families, 75 percent of which have been issued titles

and with space for another 294 families. Much more could have been achieved except for the continual delays by ISTA in making lands available and finalizing the transfer. Another severe limitation was the forceful blockade of access to lands by some militant political groups at the end of 1991, denying access to the properties for measurement purposes. In mid-May ISTA informed RONCO and the Secretariat for National Reconstruction (CONADES' successor) that all new land transfers would be in accordance with the peace accords, giving priority to ex-combatants, and in essence terminating the government agreement for this program.

- 2) Productive Projects This area of activity was an extension of the Food for Work model, except that the clear intention of projects was to develop marketable skills or actually establish an income-generating activity while receiving food aid and materials related to the activity. This area grouped micro-enterprises, line of credit, vocational training, and agricultural activities. During the last several years, little attention was given the Food for Work by RONCO because of the enormous variety of activities that could qualify for food aid and the subjectivity that the local social promoters gave this area, rendering it virtually impossible to program, monitor, and assist. Consensus among technicians (both CONADES and RONCO, as well as other observers such as those from the UN's World Food Program) was that the majority of food for work activities did little more than distribute food. Aspects such as continuity of activities, participant selection based on aptitudes, or probable local demand were seldom taken into account. Therefore these projects had little impact on the target population. Based on this type of reasoning the AID Project focus swung to the area of productive projects.

- a) Agricultural Projects CONADES promoted small agricultural production both in support of projects such as those for resettlement activities and as part of the Food for Work program. RONCO assisted in designing more than ten different crop production profiles to standardize and program the implementation of these activities. Given the large number of individual projects CONADES was planning on promoting and the scarce technical resources it had, the need for using an implementation plan was imperative. RONCO worked with CONADES' three agricultural technicians in developing this plan, which included promotion, input purchase and distribution, timing of field-level technical assistance, and monitoring during implementation.

For the 1991-92 agricultural cycle, 57 community projects covering 775 manzanas were programmed (equivalent to 542 hectares or 1,340 acres), primarily in the eastern part of the country. Unfortunately, projects in only 22 communities were implemented, covering 465 manzanas or 60 percent of the original target and reaching approximately 465 families. This situation was further exacerbated by a prolonged drought which diminished the yields in many of these projects. The major obstacle, however, was the lack of the appropriate inputs at the proper time, which led many beneficiaries to plant

without important inputs, or using minimal amounts, or at the wrong time. In an attempt to alleviate somewhat this situation, RONCO fielded two and three technicians with vehicles to supplement the technical and logistical support CONADES had available.

The conclusions and recommendations stemming from this experience are the same as those of 1990, when the need to program implementation activities was obvious:

- 1) to the degree that it is feasible, activities should be standardized to simplify operations,
- 2) promotion should be started at least three months in anticipation of the rainy season to define procurement, technical assistance, and logistics/ transport needs, and
- 3) distribution of initial inputs should be done in advance of their need to prove that the institution will comply with the programming and also because once rains start, assistance to all the beneficiary farmers would be required at the same time -- an impossibility with limited institutional resources. The risk of off-schedule delivery of inputs or inappropriate substitution of inputs is that of mis-use which could damage the crop and also of resale by the beneficiary.

- b) Micro-enterprise Development and Vocational Training RONCO worked with CONADES in the design of 12 model micro-enterprise activities (the goal was for 15) which could be set up and maintained using relatively little capital and requiring only a brief training period. Such activities were bread making, basic carpentry, chocolate making, candle making, metal working, and tailoring, among others. Social promoters were instructed on how to organize groups, choose the more appropriate activities for the groups, prepare the respective project document, and arrange for the technical training of participants. Although numerous attempts were made and many people received training, only four projects in bread making reached a minimal self-sustainable level and continued after food aid ended.

Part of the reason for this limited impact was that a micro-enterprise by nature needs few employees, and usually just a few businesses of the same type are sufficient for the small community's demand. The CONADES training programs however, were based on groups of 20 from the same community. Secondly, even though the activities required little investment for tools and materials, this was more than most people could spare, and few had access to credit. At least three of those continuing bread making businesses were able to get donations of equipment to continue after the training period

with CONADES ended and the materials were returned to CONADES. Finally, the organization and implementation of micro-enterprises require substantial assistance and follow-up, and the training and experience of many CONADES promoters were not at an adequate level to provide this in more than a few cases.

CONADES did create a department to provide or coordinate vocational training to complement the implementation of productive projects, such as tailoring, carpentry, and metalworking. The focus was on providing the basic skills to the beneficiary and also to orient the social promoters in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of training activities. Plans were drawn up, promoters were given some orientation, and numerous courses were given in communities. RONCO provided three full-time technicians in these areas (social promotion, projects, and training) during most of the last three years.

Nevertheless, many times these activities did not have the backing of other necessary elements to better ensure the desired impact, such as the technical support or credit available to the beneficiaries, and no continuity was forthcoming. As mentioned earlier, often courses were organized with little concern for community interest or demand for the vocational skills. Another fundamental problem was that within CONADES this department was considered to be marginal, to which staff persons were assigned to free up their previous positions or as a form of ostracizing employees who were considered problematic.

The generalized experience of productive projects and vocational training showed that a broad-coverage program cannot pretend to solve problems at the individual level. At best an institution can provide some key elements that are lacking, which is how the line of credit activity was chosen as a complement to productive activity. Furthermore, CONADES preferred to promote Food for Work and Community Infrastructure projects and gave little continual support to productive projects.

- c) Line of Credit As mentioned in the previous section, the need for access to credit was determined as a severe limitation to the success of individual or small group activities. Utilizing some funds recuperated from the liquidation of several prior defunct productive projects, CONADES started a pilot line of credit through an existing credit union federation. The access to credit was based on an agreement of joint liability among members of a small group of lenders from the displaced community and mirrored closely a program the federation had been carrying out for more than ten years. This project did not offer any subsidy, as commercial bank rates were applied, and the customary deductions for insurance and automatic savings fund included

under the federation's other credit programs.

The pilot program was successful in three of the initial four credit unions, disbursing nearly 350 loans among approximately 150 families and experiencing a modest 3.2 percent delinquency rate. Even when including the credit union that was later excluded by the federation from the program the total delinquency rate rose to only 6.7 percent delinquency. A further indication of success was that many of the beneficiary families that completed all three loan cycles joined the local credit unions and thereby became part of the formal banking system, no longer discriminated as being uncreditworthy. Approval was given to expand the program to ten more credit unions and with an additional \$ 110,000 in funding, which could incorporate at least another 1,200 families in the program.

Experience, even though given a limited loan volume, indicated the primary importance of effective and continual promotion to ensure appropriate participant selection and borrower compliance. Deficiency in this area was the problem with the one credit union that did not yield the expected results. Usually peer pressure is sufficient to ensure responsible borrower behavior; the difficulty was gaining the initial access to credit other than from the informal sector with enormous interest rates. Neither was the commercial interest rate a hinderance, since the repayment mechanism was tailored to the daily turnover commercial activities of the participants. This was an example of providing a needed input (credit) and allowing the responsible participant to seek the best way to employ that input, rather than trying to mold the participant into a preset activity, which is often a characteristic of assistance programs.

- 3) Formal Documentation of Persons One of the effects of the civil conflict lasting more than one decade had been the growing number of citizens who did not have their basic personal identification documents, the birth certificate and cédula (identity card). This situation arose when the municipal government documents were destroyed or when the local government ceased to function, and providing and registering these documents is the responsibility of the local government. Another cause was the loss of documents by fleeing refugees and the children born while in refugee camps in other countries. Estimates made by RONCO technicians in conjunction with other interested entities (national and international) indicate that 700,000 people need to be issued birth certificates and cédulas. Without these documents no meaningful reintegration can take place, and therefore this activity becomes a prerequisite to the successful implementation of assistance programs for the displaced and repatriated (ex-refugee) populations.

RONCO technical assistance was instrumental in finding the appropriate legal mechanism to document repatriated children and those whose lost birth certificates

had been microfilmed and were on file in the national election commission. In the name of CONADES, RONCO worked with local governments, the Salvadoran Institute for Municipal Development (ISDEM), and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to develop the strategies and mechanisms to resolve this situation, including such activities as:

- (1) participate in the drafting of two special laws needed to carry out documentation to the majority of undocumented persons: one providing special procedures to issue birth certificates and another to replace the different kinds of civil registers maintained by local governments but that had been destroyed
- (2) help design and carry out a survey of the needs and implementation capability in each of the 109 municipal governments identified as qualifying for attention under the documentation action plan
- (3) assist with the pilot project implementation in 11 municipalities, through which approximately 4,500 birth certificates were issued as well as cédulas for the adults
- (4) begin the process of orientation of possible beneficiaries and training employees in eight municipalities in the application of these laws, and
- (5) participate in the design and drafting of the national documentation action plan to be implemented through ISDEM with coordination by the Secretariat for National Reconstruction with funding by both USAID and UNHCR.

It is expected that during the next eight months of this plan, personal documentation for 500,000 persons and preparation or replacement of 4,000 civil registers in the 50 most needy municipalities can be accomplished. To accelerate the preparation of the ISDEM action plan, RONCO was providing a level of effort of five full-time technicians by the end of the contract period.

TASK AREA 3

Technical assistance in the area of food aid administration had been a key element from the beginning of the AID Project, and RONCO's efforts represented a continuation of previous contracts. The level of effort involved consisted in three to four field monitors, an advisor in food program logistics, and another in conservation of food stocks. Not all of this assistance was solely dedicated to logistics, but often was shared among several Project activities.

Well before the end of the contract period all logistical aspects of food aid had been dealt

with and the appropriate guidelines prepared and training done. However the actual implementation remained severely flawed with problems constantly arising. This situation was one which the technical assistance was unable to remedy, in large part because there was a lack of serious commitment by top management to require compliance with the norms and regulations established in the different operational manuals. Such a situation falls beyond the boundaries of technical assistance, and in recognition of this, AID contracted in July 1991 a specialized department of the Banco Salvadoreño to carry out the functions of a full-time, internal "fiscal agent" to try to force compliance by CONADES. Undoubtedly this arrangement had a positive impact on the Project outputs and helped gain some acceptance of RONCO's technical assistance. Nevertheless, this institutional weakness was never overcome, and both AID and UNWFP withdrew any further food distribution programs from CONADES as of early 1992.

Specific Accomplishments and Conclusions

RONCO advisors worked closely with CONADES staff in preparing operational manuals in a number of areas related to food aid distribution at the central and regional office levels:

- warehouse recordkeeping
- description of personnel functions and internal organization
- contracting for transportation services
- internal vehicle use and maintenance records.

The logistics advisor directed the design and implementation of a complete reorganization of CONADES' warehouses in San Salvador and San Miguel. Frequent checks were carried out of the different installations to improve security and storage conditions for food stocks and materials for agricultural and construction activities and vocational training courses. Unfortunately many recommendations were not implemented in a timely fashion for lack of sufficient management concern and clear support. However definite improvement was seen in the storage and handling of stocks by CONADES staff and in recordkeeping.

Substantial effort was placed on determining the optimal organizational structure for CONADES, arriving at the conclusion that to decentralize or regionalize would provide the most impact and accountability. For a number of reasons (some beyond the control of CONADES) this reorganization process was only partially finished by late September 1991, and therefore many operational modifications were not implemented and tried out. The central office still was programming the distributions of food and usually project material procurement and distribution as well. By the time some positive results of this change were becoming evident, decisions had been made to end the project activities with CONADES and transfer some to a new implementing agency.

Since foodstuff damage and contamination was a constant problem, technical assistance was provided continually in food conservation or preservation. At least twice RONCO was instrumental in avoiding large volume purchases by CONADES of severely inferior quality

(and potentially dangerous) dried beans. Several times FONCO technicians instructed CONADES staff in techniques to separate out insect infested and heat damaged corn stocks, thereby being able to utilize a large portion of products which otherwise would have been destroyed. Advisors also assisted CONADES in determining what stocks should be destroyed and how to follow procedures required by law.

The area of transportation was one of the two administrative areas in which little attention was paid to technical assistance (the other was acquisition of goods and services). A new operations manual for the department of general services was jointly prepared, but a more open or lenient version was substituted by CONADES management, which was then submitted to AID and the Ministry of Planning. This second version was not accepted by these entities, but efforts to insist on an acceptable manual had no results. The issue of transport was a focal point of the fiscal agent's attention, but no real change in practices was achieved.

The major conclusion concerning logistics would be that a decentralized operation for controlling the distribution and end use gives the best chance for optimal impact of resources, even though it would seem that this system is relatively inefficient. More preferable would be to have the same entity that directs the proactive-oriented tasks also be charged with the complementary food distribution. Here again the supervised use of NGOs could be an optimal solution. The key is to have compliance with clear program policies and sound administrative procedures to minimize misuses. The focus of the central ~~entity~~ be to establish these policies and procedures, to train the field staff in their application, and to supervise and monitor implementation.

TASK AREA 4

During the first years of the civil conflict the displaced families tended to group together, often in camps. However, over the years the groups began dispersing on their own or as a result of efforts to close down the camps. The last diagnostic survey just completed showed that this process of dispersion has continued, and today much of the displaced population has integrated itself into surrounding communities. Most of this reintegration was achieved by the families themselves, with little outside help, but CONADES and several other public and private sector institutions aided in this process.

CONADES placed substantial emphasis on infrastructure improvement as a major program activity to alleviate some of the more pressing needs and to induce long-lasting solutions to this population's needs, both under the Food for Work program as well as separate projects. No reliable data are available covering all that was done through AID Project 519-0281 in this area, but under the last reprogrammed action plan of April 1991-March 1992 the category of infrastructure included activities (that were largely completed) such as: construction of 291 houses, improvements in 14 housing units, construction of 388 latrines and nine wells, and providing coordination with the Ministry of Public Works to build 27 kms. of roadway. Under past action plans there were other types of activities as well:

building drainage ditches along roadways, improving road surfaces by laying down stones, building and improving schools and community meeting places, and building community water distribution systems. Another focus of infrastructure projects was to complement the relocation activities for returnees and resettlements. CONADES frequently relied on two NGOs also financed by the AID Project to provide these services for resettlements. Other forms of assisting in relocation or facilitating permanent improvements in the displaced community's work and living space were dealt with in previous sections.

Specific Accomplishments and Conclusions

RONCO assisted CONADES in this ambitious effort through various means, several of which have been discussed: technical assistance in productive projects and with resettlements continued during the life of the contract; several surveys were conducted at the community level to detect needs; work with social promotion and in vocational training was carried out. However little was done specifically with infrastructure until early 1991 when different advisors' responsibilities were shifted to provide more support for implementing CONADES' action plan, and the logistics advisor dedicated more time to this area.

The attempt to support infrastructure projects with technical assistance met with substantial resistance at the central office level. Despite the reorganization of CONADES, in practical terms this area was largely unaffected: the social promoters often were not utilized during project implementation, and matters of project logistics and administration usually were not channelled through the general services department except as a formality after action had already been taken. Efforts were made to provide useful guidelines and aid with project supervision. A detailed implementation matrix was designed to track by individual project all inputs and materials needed and also the distribution of food aid, if they had been sent to the site, and the degree of project completion. A detailed proposal for a standardized housing unit was prepared to prevent the substantial variation between housing projects. However, the advisor was never allowed to participate in the promotion, design, or implementation of most projects, except in those cases that CONADES' regional office technicians permitted on-site assistance.

Not surprisingly, it was precisely in this area that the fiscal agents had many of their observations concerning procedures that were not being followed, and also where frequent complaints were received respecting sub-standard materials and anomalies with transportation services. This situation was never rectified, and the related observation was formally presented to AID by the fiscal agent. The area of infrastructure (or more precisely, the procurement and delivery of related materials) was one in which RONCO's assistance was not allowed to enter, despite the importance of this activity in fulfilling Project objectives of permanent integration of the displaced population into the society.

The primary conclusion reached is that NGOs should be used whenever possible. These entities have a built-in incentive to utilize low-cost and rapid implementation practices, as

well as a positive reputation to protect. Also, NGOs strongly prefer to present a complete package of basic services and infrastructure, rather than isolated and partial projects. Lastly, as community organization is a key mechanism for NGOs' operations, there is a much better probability that the more important and more keenly felt needs by the community will be addressed first, and that the process of social and economic integration will continue after the original projects end.

TASK AREA 5

The last area of attention stipulated in the technical assistance contract concerned the institutional development of CONADES. During the last one and one-half years of the contract this area took on added importance, since CONADES was considered to be the most likely institution to be given the lead responsibility of the national reconstruction program. Given the past difficulties in carrying out Project activities, it became obvious that CONADES would need to change to meet the challenge of reconstruction. RONCO's role also was being reconsidered -- to shift from a strong emphasis on monitoring to a combination of monitoring plus on-site technical assistance to strengthen the variety of implementation activities. The reorganization of CONADES became a priority activity for RONCO and absorbed much of the technicians' time during 1991.

Specific Accomplishments and Conclusions

- 1) General Activities RONCO carried out a series of activities with the intention of strengthening both the institutional soundness and implementing capacity of CONADES. One effort dealt with the personnel selection process for those key positions funded under the AID Project. RONCO participated in a selection committee comprised of representatives from CONADES, AID, and the Ministry of the Interior. Guidelines and position descriptions were drawn up, and a point system was used. This process was later taken to the regional level as part of the decentralization effort.

RONCO also helped CONADES' management to structure all employee positions and salary levels into a proposal to reorder position classifications, responsibilities, and salaries, making them comparable to those in like institutions. This was presented to the Ministries of Planning and the Interior and was later approved.

In late 1991 a comprehensive manual was written with the head of the personnel office in CONADES. This contained guidelines for announcing position openings, the selection process itself, and contracting. All positions were classified as to precisely what types of examinations would be required. The materials actually to be used in these evaluations were included in the manual, as well as detailed position descriptions. This manual represents an important contribution for institutions with employee functions similar to those of CONADES.

Another area RONCO dealt with involved employee training. The same office created to coordinate vocational training was charged with orientation and training activities within CONADES. Training events were held on topics such as: micro-enterprise management; social organization for productive project implementation; general social promotion techniques; warehousing, handling, and conservation techniques for food stocks; spelling and writing skills for secretaries; and lastly, implementation activities for CONADES' decentralization and regionalization. The effectiveness in this area was limited by the scant attention and virtually no budgetary support given the training office.

Twice during the contract period RONCO sponsored training workshops by outside consultants for both CONADES and RONCO personnel. The focus of the first was on defining program activity areas and strengthening team planning. The second concerned basic inter-personal management skills and the process of accepting change within an organization (a factor in the then-underway reorganization).

RONCO maintained a full-time advisor in the area of financial management and general administration. The following is a list of several of the numerous activities covered by the technician in conjunction with the CONADES counterparts at the central and regional offices:

- prepare operational manuals of regulations and procedures for the acquisition of goods and services, for petty cash funds, for the General Services Department operations (including transportation contracting and general purchases), and for payrolls
- provide technical backstopping in the areas of project and institutional accounting, physical and financial inventory controls, preparation of financial reports and liquidations of budgetary disbursements, and clarification and reconciliation of audit observations.

Another technical area with a full-time advisor was that of management information systems and computer center support. Given the informal nature of CONADES' management, an efficient information system was not considered a priority and was not allowed to be implemented, even though the RONCO advisor has prepared the initial system designs and programming needs. A proposal for decentralizing the computer center operations was made as well, but was not accepted by CONADES management. The advisor was able to assist CONADES in establishing the updating mechanism for maintaining the desired dynamic register of past and present beneficiaries. Field visits were made and training exercises were carried out to keep up-to-date the census of displaced families and food recipients. RONCO also served as the procurement agent for new equipment for the computer center and participated in training the operators in network computing.

- 2) **Institutional Reorganization.** The process of reorganization started with a series of analyses of CONADES' different departments in a joint CONADES-RONCO team effort (warehouse, distribution, projects, general services, San Miguel regional office, etc.). The initial results were presented separately to AID, UNWFP, the Ministry of Interior (of which CONADES is part), and the Presidential Cabinet for Social Affairs. After general approval was formally obtained, a formal organizational manual was prepared in March 1991 to guide the implementation of the decentralization/ regionalization process. This document covered the organizational structure and detailed the functions of each office within CONADES at the central and regional levels. This manual was then utilized to analyze the operations and experience gained in the San Miguel Regional Office, since this office had been functioning in a semi-autonomous manner for several years.

At this stage, difficulties began to emerge in continuing the decentralization. As CONADES still did not have approval of its action plan, the lack of resources became a reason for inability to continue. Another joint study was done in May to separate those activities which still could be accomplished from those that indeed did require more funding. The result was a detailed listing of tasks for each region and the central office. RONCO and CONADES technicians worked together to draw up a programming of finalizing regionalization, which was scheduled to be finished by late September, such that the last quarter of 1991 could be used to make as much progress as possible in achieving the action plan objectives recently approved by AID.

Still, much resistance was evident, especially in the areas of personnel selection, project material procurement, transportation contracting, and providing adequate furnishings, equipment, and vehicles for regional offices. Nevertheless, by mid-November three regional offices were staffed and functioning, even though organizational difficulties continued. Virtually all the RONCO technicians participated nearly full-time in this effort, assisting with in-service training at the regional level and frequent office and project site visits to provide technical and logistical (vehicle) support to the regional staffs.

There was no doubt that by decentralizing (even to the imperfect degree obtained) CONADES staff became more conscientious, more personally motivated, and more efficient, despite all limitations. To that degree the decentralization process was a definite success, and RONCO had been instrumental in bringing about this change. Unfortunately the primary reason for undertaking the reorganization was forfeited: by this time the Ministry of Planning had identified CONADES as being too weak an institution to be given the responsibility of overseeing the national reconstruction plan.

By the end of January 1992 AID approved the Government's request to transfer CONADES' project resources and the obligation to attend to remaining displaced and repatriated groups' needs. A new implementing institution was designated (the

Secretariat for National Reconstruction -- SER), several activities were transferred with key personnel (repatriation and documentation, displaced family register, line of credit, returnees and resettlements) to the new institution, and the process of transfer and liquidation of CONADES began.

In the time remaining under contract, RONCO technicians actively supported the institutional transition, as well as the administrative and financial close-out process in CONADES. At the request of AID, RONCO presented in February 1992 a preliminary design of a system to allow SER to track and evaluate activities undertaken by public and private or non-governmental entities operating within the national reconstruction plan. RONCO then focused its resources on two major activities:

- (1) carrying out a final analytical survey of all active and inactive communities of displaced families registered with CONADES, and
- (2) finalizing the pilot project stage of the nation-wide documentation plan and participating in preparing and presenting the follow-on action plan in coordination with ISDEM and SER.

Technical assistance to CRS-Cáritas also continued through this period, ending with a training course in food stock storage, handling, and conservation in conjunction with UNWFP.